



Connecticut Veterans' Affairs Committee
February 25, 2014 Public Hearing

**Testimony in favor of bills SB 210, SB 212, SB 213, SB 214, SB 215, SB 216, SB 217,
SB 218, HB 5293, HB 5297, HB 5298, HB 5299.**

Good afternoon Senator Leone, Representative Hennessy, Senator Welch, Representative Yaccarino, and members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I am Dawn A. McDaniel, Executive Vice President of the Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce. The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce seeks to foster growth and opportunity for veteran-owned businesses and veterans transitioning to the workforce.

The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce represents the voice of over 42,000 veteran owned businesses in the state, accounting for 8% of the state's GDP. Studies have shown that Veterans operate successful businesses and are more likely to hire veterans. Over the past four years, the UConn Entrepreneur Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities has invested \$1.2 Million into veteran-owned businesses, which has resulted in \$6.5 Million in gross revenues. We support state legislation that lowers barriers to entry to business ownership, economic reintegration, workforce development, and transition to the civilian sector.

The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce supports providing servicemembers, veterans, and their families the best benefits available. In Connecticut, the veteran population represents 6.15% of the state's population. These brave few support our nation's freedoms and offer unrelenting support in the state's time of need.

All the bills below strive to improve the life and transition of military servicemembers, veterans, and their families by increasing workforce re-entry and economic reintegration opportunities, reducing unemployment, and protecting the integrity of service from fraud.

We support these bills and appreciate the committee's efforts to provide these benefits. The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce looks forward to serving as a resource for the committee and working with the committee members on any legislation that will enhance, increase, and promote veteran-owned businesses and provide meaningful employment to all of our state's veterans. Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you and we stand ready to answer any questions you may have.



Bills Supported by the Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Licensing and Transitioning Veterans to Civilian Life

SB 212– AAC IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TASK FORCE and,

HB 5299 - AAC THE FINDINGS OF THE MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TASK FORCE.

Allowing military experience and training to account for civilian licensing criteria goes a long way toward reducing these barriers and provides the opportunity for Veterans to get to work faster. This legislation is a great start toward building a bridge from military to civilian life. We support the task force findings and offer our support in finding further solutions and including more occupations.

SB 213 - AAC THE VETERANS' OPPORTUNITIES PILOT PROGRAM.

This legislation provides the groundwork for expanding opportunities for Veterans in the workplace.

SB 214 – AAC A TAX CREDIT FOR DONATIONS OF VEHICLES TO VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS.

We support this legislation as it provides an incentive for the community to engage with the Veteran population and enhances the connection between civilian and military communities ultimately resulting in a better transition experience.

SB 218 – AAC A VETERANS' PROJECTS ACCOUNT.

This is a wonderful way for the community to show their appreciation to Veterans for their service and sacrifice. An account such as this will provide much needed support to non-profits serving veterans and supporting their transition. Programs that build opportunity to business ownership and skills for the workplace offer a solid solution to reducing unemployment and homelessness among Veterans around the state.

HB 5293 AAC STOLEN VALOR.

The uniform of the armed services is a symbol of pride and honor. Those who have worn it and made the sacrifice for their country take this issue of stolen valor seriously. At a minimum stolen valor is disrespectful to those who have made the sacrifice and served their country. Of greater concern is how stolen valor undermines the integrity of Veterans everywhere. The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce is committed to being part of the solution. We have taken organizational steps and implemented technology to prevent “stolen valor” and fraudulent self-identification as a service disabled or veteran-owned business within our membership.



Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce

SB 215 - AAC VETERANS' PREFERENCES IN THE RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND HOUSING AUTHORITY PROJECTS.

Lack of housing serves as a barrier for successful transition from military to civilian life. Providing more benefits will work to reduce the unemployed and homeless veteran population in Connecticut.

SB 216 - AAC VETERANS.

The cultural divide between military and civilian populations continue to grow. This study will bring hardships among veterans to the forefront so that adequate and effective solutions can be implemented.

Active Duty/National Guard support and benefits

SB 210 - AAC VETERANS WHO SERVED IN THE NATIONAL GUARD.

Service members regardless of branch deserve equal benefits for their service and sacrifice to our nation.

SB 217 - An Act Concerning EXCUSED ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN OF SERVICE MEMBERS.

Deployment can be especially challenging for children. Providing excused time for children to spend time with their parent during the deployment cycle is a valuable benefit that continues to support our military children.

HB 5297 - AAC A DEDUCTION FROM THE INCOME TAX FOR AMOUNTS RECEIVED AS ACTIVE SERVICE PAY.

This tax deduction provides additional support to offset the sacrifice and burden of deployment and activation.

HB 5298 - AAC ACTIVE SERVICE PAY FOR MEMBERS OF THE CONNECTICUT NATIONAL GUARD.

This pay increase provides additional support to offset the sacrifice and burden of deployment.

